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1872-12-10

Letter from [John Muir] to [J. B.] Mc Chesney, 1872 Dec 10.

John Muir

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[Original letter returned to Mrs. McChesney]

To J. B. McChesney

Yosemite, Dec. 10th, 1872.

Dear McChesney:

Yours of Nov. 30th is here. Many thanks for the plants, though I am not much wiser. I knew the generic names of the first three. Only two are fully named. I suppose that the specimens I sent were too small and fragmentary to be determined with certainty. If I could only have access to books containing these plants I could easily name them. I have read Tyndall's Hours of Exercise, etc. Tyndall is a true man, with eyes that can see far down in the fountain truths of nature. Exercise

I am glad to know that you miss no opportunity in seeking Nature's altars. May she be good to you and feed your soul while you labor amid those Oakland wastes of civilization. I love [the] ocean as I do the mountains -- indeed the mountains are an ocean with harder waves than yours.

[Charles Warren] cl

You must be very happy in communion with so many kindred minds. I hope to know Stoddart some day. Tell him that I am going to build a nest and that it will always be open to him. Come next year, all of you. Come to these purest of terrestrial fountains. Come and receive baptism and absolution from civilized sins. You were but sprinkled last year. Come and be immersed! You have never seen our valley with her jewels on, never seen her flowers of snow. P A few days ago many a flower ripened in the fields of air and they have fallen to us. All the trees and the bushes are flowered beyond summer, bowed down in snow bloom and all the rocks are buried. The day after the "storm" (a most damnable name for the flowering of the clouds) I lay out on the meadow to eat a grand meal of new-made beauty, and about midday I suddenly wanted the outside mountains, and so cast off my coat and ran up towards Glacier Point. I soon was near [the] top, and was very hungry for the view that was so grandly mingled and covered with snow and sky, but the snow was now more than ten feet deep and dusty and light as winter fog. I tried to wallow and swim it, but the slope was so steep that I always fell back and sank out of sight, and I was fully baffled. I had a glorious slide downwards. Hawthorne speaks of the spirituality of locomotive railroad travel, but this balmy slide in the mealy snow out-spiritualized all other motions that I ever made in space.

Farewell, write again. I am lonely.

[John Muir]

["John Muir, Dec. 10, 1872" written on back of letter]